

Sunday and the Sabbath: What Christians Need to Know

by Jeremy James



Christians sometimes refer to Sunday as the 'Christian Sabbath', but they are mistaken when they use this term. They also treat Sunday as a day to be observed after the pattern of the Jewish Sabbath, but they are mistaken in this also.

These errors show that many Bible-believing Christians do not actually know the difference between the Sabbath and the Lord's Day. This means they do not know how to honor the Lord's Day in a Biblical way.

We need to be as spiritually equipped as we can possibly be in this age of apostasy and supernatural deception. If we don't understand the true meaning of the Lord's Day and what it contributes to the life and well-being of every believer, then we are missing out on a truly great source of enrichment and strength.

The Sabbath

We'll begin by looking at the Biblical significance of the Sabbath and the role it was intended to play in God's plan for mankind.

The word Sabbath (Hebrew - *shabbath*) means *the seventh in a sequence of seven* and is first mentioned in Exodus 16:23:

"And he said unto them, This is that which the LORD hath said, To morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the LORD: bake that which ye will bake to day, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning."

The Sabbath (*shabbath*) is not mentioned anywhere in Genesis. While Genesis says the LORD rested on the seventh day, it does not use the word *shabbath* but *shēbiy`iy* meaning "seventh."

The distinct meaning of each word may be seen clearly in the following verses:

**"Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh (*shēbiy`iy*) day,
which is the sabbath (*shabbath*), in it there shall be none."
(Exodus 16:26)**

**"But the seventh (*shēbiy`iy*) day is the sabbath (*shabbath*)
of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work"
(Exodus 20:10)**

So, while the Sabbath is normally taken to mean a day of rest (when the Israelites were to do no work), the word itself does not mean 'day of rest'. Rather, the seventh day is a day of rest because the LORD decreed that, on the seventh day, the Israelites were to abstain from work.



This may seem like a minor distinction, but it is actually quite important, as we shall see. Once the word *shabbath* took on the character of a 'day of rest' it could then be used to refer to any other day (or year) which had the same character. In Leviticus the LORD asks the Israelites to set aside every seventh year as a Sabbath, which meant that the year was intended to have the same character as the seventh day:

**"But in the seventh (*shēbiy`iy*) year shall be a sabbath (*shabbath*)
of rest unto the land, a sabbath (*shabbath*) for the LORD:
thou shalt neither sow thy field, nor prune thy vineyard."
(Leviticus 25:4)**

A day other than the seventh could also be a Sabbath. Consider, for example, the Feast of Trumpets which always fell on the first day of the seventh month. The month itself was the seventh in a series, but the day itself could fall on any of the seven days of the week. The feast could have fallen on a Tuesday in a given year and that particular Tuesday would have been a Sabbath:

**"Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall ye have a sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, an holy convocation. Ye shall do no servile work therein: but ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD."
(Leviticus 23:24-25)**

When did the Sabbath first apply?

When the LORD gave the Sabbath to the Israelites as part of the Mosaic law, He referred to the fact that He too worked for six days and rested on the seventh when He made the world:

"But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it." (Exodus 20:10-11)

Many have assumed – because of this – that the Sabbath had been observed since the time of Adam, but this was not the case. The Law, including the Sabbath, was given to Israel on Mount Sinai. The Word of God states specifically that the Sabbath was given as "a sign" between God and the children of Israel, to be observed as a "perpetual covenant" -

**"Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant.
It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever..."
(Exodus 31:16-17)**

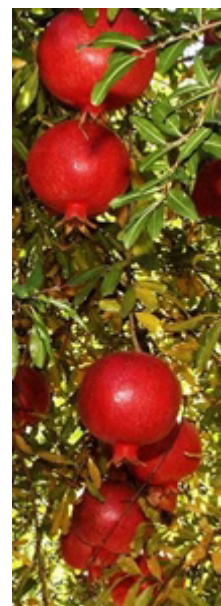
Since the nation of Israel did not come into being until the LORD brought the Israelites out of Egypt "to be a special people unto Himself" (Deuteronomy 7:6), the Sabbath as we know it could not have existed before that time. It was never given at any time to mankind in general, but to Israel only.



We have additional confirmation from Nehemiah that the Sabbath was unknown to man until the LORD gave it to Israel on Mount Sinai:



**"Thou camest down also upon mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest them right judgments, and true laws, good statutes and commandments: And madest known unto them thy holy sabbath, and commandedst them precepts, statutes, and laws, by the hand of Moses thy servant:"
(Nehemiah 9:13-14)**



It should be noted also that the Book of Job, which is older than the five books of Moses, made no reference to the Sabbath. Given the exceptional range of spiritual matters addressed by Job, it would be unthinkable that something as important as the Sabbath would have been omitted if it was already in existence.

Does the Sabbath apply to the Church?

We may now ask: Did the Church inherit the Sabbath from Israel and, if so, should she observe it in the same way?

We have already shown (in an earlier paper) that Replacement Theology has no validity and that the Church did not replace the nation of Israel. Therefore she did not inherit any of the promises made to Israel as a nation. Furthermore, since Christ both fulfilled the Law of Moses and abolished it for purposes of salvation, there is no legal obligation on the Church to observe the Sabbath.

Some would argue that the abolition of the Law did not apply to the Ten Commandments and that, on foot of the fourth Commandment, the requirement to observe the Sabbath is still binding on the Church. However, this line of reasoning is faulty since the Law did include the Ten Commandments. The apostle Paul called the Law "**the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones**" (2 Corinthians 3:7) and stated with "**great plainness of speech**" (v.12) that it was now "**done away**" (v.11) and "**abolished**" (v.13).

The ten Commandments, engraved on tablets of stone, were abolished in so far as they pertain to our salvation. After the resurrection of Christ, salvation (or justification) was found only through faith in Christ and what he achieved for us through his death and resurrection.

This did not mean, of course, that a righteous and God-fearing person could drift into sin. After he is born again, the believer lives in accordance with the law written in his heart – **"This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them;" (Hebrews 10:16).** He knows, through his conscience and the prompting of the Holy Spirit dwelling within him, when he is acting contrary to God's will.



**Modern Mount Sinai.
[Believed by many to be the Biblical Mount Sinai.]**

As Christ said, **"If ye love me, keep my commandments."** (John 14:15). The believer keeps these commandments because he loves Christ and strives in all ways to serve and honor him. But this is never done for purposes of salvation – since he is **already** saved and born again. It is done rather for purposes of sanctification.

Christ refers to these commandments as "my [not *the*] commandments." We can think of them, therefore, as the law of Christ for the believer. In fact the apostle Paul uses this very term: **"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."** (Galatians 6:2)

We have no record that Christ kept the Sabbath in the 40 days after his resurrection. In fact, we can safely infer that he did not since Sabbath observance entailed attendance at the Temple or a synagogue, where non-believers would also have been present. We know from Paul (chapter 15 of 1 Corinthians) that Christ was seen only by his followers after his resurrection, therefore he could not have attended either the Temple or a synagogue on the Sabbath.

Christ was under the law before Calvary (**"made under the law"** - Galatians 4:4), but by his death and resurrection he abolished the law.

Christ was the only person to fulfill the law. If the Law had not been revealed, we would never have known that Christ had fulfilled its exacting standards and thereby qualified to serve as the perfect sacrificial Lamb.

The Law of Christ

The church is now under a new law, the law of Christ:

**"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another;
as I have loved you, that ye also love one another."
(John 13:34)**

**"This is my commandment, That ye love one another,
as I have loved you."
(John 15:12)**

**"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which
is in heaven is perfect." (Matthew 5:48)**

This law, this **"new commandment"**, is written in the heart of every born-again believer. It embraces the Ten Commandments in all their depth and maturity. At the same time it reveals to our spiritual senses the unity common to all of them. The commandments are made new in our hearts through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. We no longer observe them out of duty but as the sole and perfect way of expressing our love for the living God-man, Christ Jesus of Nazareth.

The Gospels and Epistles remind us that the Ten Commandments are no less essential today in the ongoing sanctification of all true believers than they were when the LORD first gave them on Mount Sinai. They did not lead to salvation (or justification) in 1440 BC and they still do not do so today. We are saved only by faith in the Messiah, the Holy One of Israel, Christ Jesus of Nazareth.

If we take all of the injunctions in the New Testament that apply directly to the individual, we will likely find there are several hundred. It has been estimated that in the Epistle to the Ephesians alone, there are at least forty commands and injunctions bearing on the spiritual and material life of every believer. Here are just a few from chapter five of the gospel of Matthew:

- let your light shine before men through your good works
- rejoice and be exceedingly glad when men revile you
- be not angry with your brother without a cause
- let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay:
- resist not evil
- give to him that asketh thee
- love your enemies
- bless them that curse you
- do good to them that hate you
- pray for them which despitefully use you.



Are these commandments? Of course they are. Not only did Jesus say that they are, but he said we were not to teach that even the least of them could be broken:

**"Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments,
and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of
heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall
be called great in the kingdom of heaven."
(Matthew 5:19)**

The Greek word for *commandment* in Matthew 5:19 above is the same word for *commandment* in Mark 10:19 below, namely *entolē* -

**"Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery,
Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness,
Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother."
(Mark 10:19)**

The Gospels and Epistles set forth each of the Ten Commandments – see the table **overleaf** – so we can have no doubt (a) that they are just as applicable today as when they were given on Mount Sinai and (b) that they are neither more nor less relevant to our ongoing sanctification than the other commandments found elsewhere throughout the New Testament – **"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever."** (Hebrews 13:8)

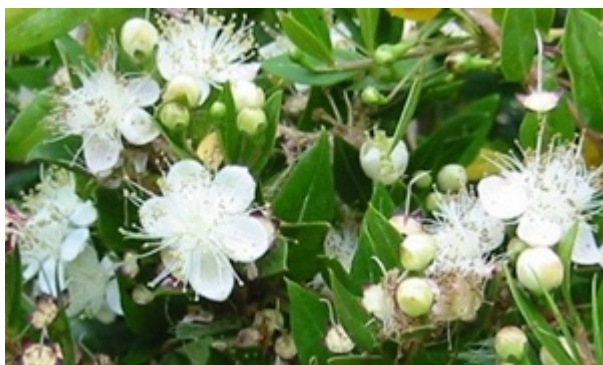
In his epistle to the Colossians, Paul makes it quite clear that Sabbath observance was not binding on the church but that the individual could observe it as a matter of personal choice. This is without doubt a most unusual way to speak of a commandment:

**"Let no man therefore judge you in meat [i.e food], or in drink, or in
respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days:"
(Colossians 2:16)**

It may seem to some that the commandment has effectively been annulled and is not applicable to the church in any sense, but this is not so. Rather the Word of God is telling us that the Sabbath commandment, when applied to the church, takes on an entirely new character.



| | Commandment in the Old Testament | | Commandment in the New Testament | |
|----|---|-----------------------|--|----------------|
| 1 | "I am the LORD thy God... Thou shalt have no other gods before me." | Exodus 20:2-3 | "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." | Matt. 4:10 |
| 2 | "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image..." | Exodus 20:4-5 | " Little children, keep yourselves from idols" | 1 John 5:21 |
| 3 | "Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain..." | Exodus 20:7 | " After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name." | Matt. 6:9 |
| 4 | "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy..." | Exodus 20:8- 11 | "Let no man therefore judge you in meat [i.e food], or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days:" | Col. 2:16 |
| 5 | "Honour thy father and thy mother..." | Exodus 20:12 | "Thou knowest the commandments ...Honour thy father and mother..." | Mark 10:19 |
| 6 | "Thou shalt not kill." | Exodus 20:13 | "Thou knowest the commandments... Do not kill..." | Mark 10:19 |
| 7 | "Thou shalt not commit adultery." | Exodus 20:14 | "Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery..." | Mark 10:19 |
| 8 | "Thou shalt not steal." | Exodus 20:15 | "Thou knowest the commandments... Do not steal..." | Mark 10:19 |
| 9 | "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour." | Exodus 20:16 | " Thou shalt not bear false witness..." | Romans 13:9 |
| 10 | "Thou shalt not covet... any thing that is thy neighbour's." | Exodus 20:17 | " Thou shalt not covet..." | Romans 13:9 |



As Christians, we do not cease from our labors on the seventh day only. The Israelite could not carry a burden on the Sabbath, but he could do so on each of the other six days of the week. The born-again believer, however, has handed his entire burden to Christ – **"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."** (Matthew 11:28). Spiritually speaking the believer fulfils the Sabbath – the true meaning of the Sabbath – when he rests in the arms of the LORD. And this cannot be confined to any particular day, whether the seventh, the first, or any other day, but begins the day he is born again.

The part of man that lives in this wonderful Sabbath state is his spirit. His soul – mind, emotions and inner sensibilities – will enter progressively and more fully into that state through his ongoing sanctification. Alas, our flesh will never taste of this state until the resurrection/rapture of the church when all will receive a glorified physical body.



The Lord's Day

We now need to consider the Scriptural significance of the Lord's Day.

The term appears only once in the Bible:

**"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice,
as of a trumpet, Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last:"
(Revelation 1:10-11)**

The original Greek word for 'Lord' in this passage is 'Kyrios' which can be translated 'Lord' (equivalent to *Adonai* in Hebrew) or LORD (equivalent to *YHWH* in Hebrew). However, the passage points directly to Christ, the Alpha and Omega, which would indicate that it is referring to our resurrected Redeemer.

The New Testament never implies that the early Christians observed the Sabbath or that they were required to observe it. On the other hand it does suggest that the early Christians observed the Lord's Day but – and this is important – it never implies that Christians were required to observe it.

Which day was the Lord's Day?

As he travelled from city to city, the apostle Paul attended the synagogue on the Sabbath on a great many occasions in order to witness to unsaved Jews, but we are never told that he or any other believer observed the Sabbath. Of course we can infer that many saved Jews did in fact observe the Sabbath, but there was no requirement on them to do so. In this respect they were similar to saved Jews who continued to observe the dietary laws, even though there was no need for them to do so.

So, from Revelation 1:10 ("**I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day**") we know that a certain day was known as "the Lord's Day." It is reasonable to assume, based on the need for at least one day of corporate worship in the week, that the Lord's Day fell every seven days. It is also reasonable to infer that it was not Saturday (or sundown Friday to sundown Saturday) since John would have called it the Sabbath rather than invent a different term. We also know that "the Lord's day" to which he referred was not "**the great day of the LORD**" (**Zephaniah 1:14**) since that 'day' in question referred to the End Time which is scheduled to unfold over a period of several years.

In addition, extant writings from the Apostolic and immediate post-Apostolic period show that the Lord's Day fell on the first day of the week and was celebrated as such by early Christians across the middle east.

The strongest support in the New Testament for the Lord's Day, other than Revelation 1:10, may be found in Acts 20:6-7:

"And we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and came unto them to Troas in five days; where we abode seven days. And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight."



Ruins at Troas dating from 2nd century AD.

Being in Troas for seven days, Paul could have chosen any day of the week to meet with the Christians living there, to preach to them, and break bread with them – namely, to celebrate the Lord's Day – but he chose the first day of the week. We can infer also from this passage that the day itself was based on Roman time (where the day commenced at midnight) and not Jewish time (where the day commenced at six o'clock in the evening).

Troas was in north-west Turkey. The disciples gathered sometime after daybreak on Sunday and celebrated the Lord's Day with Paul. The Apostle then preached until midnight (Acts 20:7), around which time a young man named Eutychus fell from the loft and was "**taken up dead.**" Paul brought him back to life. They then ate a little and talked till "**break of day**" (Monday), when Paul departed. It is notable that, in the only instance in the New Testament where the celebration of the Lord's Day is recorded, a dead person is restored to life.

When writing to the church at Corinth Paul also referred to a task which could most easily be carried out when all members of the church were gathered together in the same place:

"Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem." (1 Corinthians 16:1-3)

Since the church came together for worship on the first day of the week, it was the most appropriate time to make a collection for the needy in Jerusalem. This is further evidence that Sunday, the Lord's Day, was not equivalent to the Sabbath since the collection of money in this way would have been forbidden under the Law.

Old Testament references to the Lord's Day

Even though the creation of the church was never expressly mentioned in the Old Testament, the Lord's Day was foreshadowed in a number of ways:

"Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go into them, and I will praise the LORD: This gate of the LORD, into which the righteous shall enter. I will praise thee: for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation. The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the LORD's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes. This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it."
(Psalm 118:19-24)

This passage was cited by Jesus during his ministry:

"Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?"
(Matthew 21:42)

The Book of Acts makes a direct connection between the stone which the builders rejected and the resurrection of Christ:

**"Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel,
that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye
crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him
doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the
stone which was set at nought of you builders,
which is become the head of the corner."
(Acts 4:10-11)**

Taken together these passages teach a profound truth. Through them we can clearly see that **"the day which the LORD hath made"** was a specific day in history, namely the day on which Jesus was raised from the dead.

The same truth is celebrated in Psalm 2:

**"I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me,
Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee."
(Psalm 2:7)**

We know from Hebrews 5:5 that the special day mentioned in Psalm 2:7 (**"this day"**) is the day Jesus was glorified, the day of his resurrection:

**"So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high
priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son,
today have I begotten thee."
(Hebrews 5:5)**

From these verses of Scripture we can see that – at the time of Creation – the LORD of heaven and earth picked out a specific day, far into the future, when His Son would be glorified. That day was the day of the Resurrection! So, if the LORD chose the first day of the week for this sublime purpose, then it must surely be a special day indeed in the life of every believer.

The Eighth Day

When viewed as a day in a sequence of days, the first day of the week can also be reckoned as the eighth day. Since it falls after the seventh day, it is eighth in the sequence.

Scripture gives a special place to the eighth day, a standing which no other day enjoyed, apart from the Sabbath. The LORD decreed that all males were to be circumcised or dedicated to Him on the eighth day:

**"And in the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised."
(Leviticus 12:3)**

Likewise, the firstborn of all sheep, goats and oxen were to be sacrificed or given to Him no earlier than the eighth day:

**"Likewise shalt thou do with thine oxen, and with thy sheep: seven days it shall be with his dam; on the eighth day thou shalt give it me."
(Exodus 22:30)**

**"When a bullock, or a sheep, or a goat, is brought forth, then it shall be seven days under the dam; and from the eighth day and thenceforth it shall be accepted for an offering made by fire unto the LORD."
(Leviticus 22:27)**

The eighth day also had a special place in the cleansing of lepers. Throughout the Bible leprosy is a symbol of sin in its most obstinate and corrupting form, requiring the leper to live outside the camp, cover his mouth with a cloth, and cry "Unclean! Unclean!" if anyone approached him. Even after he is cleansed by the priest – deemed free of leprosy – in a special ceremony detailed in chapter 14 of Leviticus, and allowed back into the camp, he must spend an additional seven days outside his tent. On the seventh day he must shave himself completely and wash his clothes. However, it is only on the eighth day, when the priest offers the prescribed atoning sacrifices on his behalf and performs a further ceremony, that the leprous person is perfectly cleansed of all its effects:

**"And on the eighth day he shall take two he lambs without blemish, and one ewe lamb of the first year without blemish, and three tenth deals of fine flour for a meat offering, mingled with oil, and one log of oil."
(Leviticus 14:10)**

The eighth day points to the Resurrection of Christ on the first day of the week, when he rose from the grave and revealed thereby the complete and perfect atonement for sin for all who believe. Before that glorious day, no sin could be forgiven unconditionally but only in anticipation of the work that Christ would perform on Calvary.

A similar cleansing ceremony is outlined in chapter 6 of Numbers for a Nazarite who breaks his vow inadvertently by coming in contact with a corpse. He too must shave his head on the seventh day and come before the priest on the eighth day bearing his sacrificial offerings. Only then can his defilement be cleansed.



The eighth day also marked the climax of the Feast of Tabernacles. This was probably the most convivial of the annual feasts of Israel, when every family dwelt in a 'tabernacle', a lightweight structure made of branches, palm fronds, and other materials. This was meant to commemorate the 40 years in the wilderness of Sinai when the entire nation lived in tents or improvised shelters. As such it was a practical re-enactment of their experience and a celebration of all that the LORD had done for them, bringing them safely out of the land of Egypt and providing for all their needs:

"Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the feast of tabernacles for seven days unto the LORD. On the first day shall be an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein. Seven days ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD: on the eighth day shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD: it is a solemn assembly; and ye shall do no servile work therein."

(Leviticus 23:34-36)


"Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the LORD seven days: on the first day shall be a sabbath, and on the eighth day shall be a sabbath." (Leviticus 23:39)

"On the eighth day ye shall have a solemn assembly: ye shall do no servile work therein:" (Numbers 29:35)

The Feast of Tabernacles in the latter half of the year was in many respects the counterpart of the Feast of Unleavened Bread which fell in the first half of the year. Each of the other annual feasts detailed in the Pentateuch comprised one day only, namely Passover, First Fruits, Weeks (Pentecost), Trumpets, and Yom Kippur.

Both the Feast of Tabernacles and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were of seven days duration, where the first day in each case was a Sabbath (a day of "holy convocation" on which no servile work was performed). On the other hand, the Feast of Unleavened Bread was preceded by a special day, the Passover, which was not a Sabbath (or "holy convocation"), while the Feast of Tabernacles concluded with the addition of an "eighth day" which was a holy convocation.

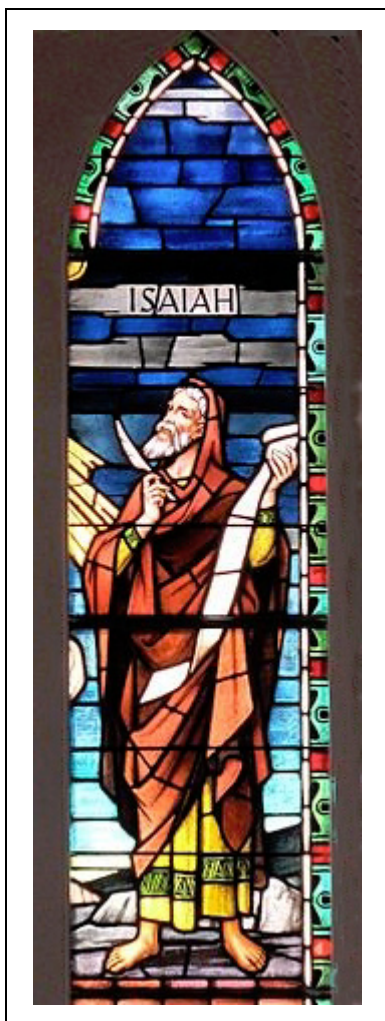
| | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Feast of Unleavened Bread | Pass-over | Day 1 | Day 2 | Day 3 | Day 4 | Day 5 | Day 6 | Day 7 |
| Feast of Tabernacles | Day 1 | Day 2 | Day 3 | Day 4 | Day 5 | Day 6 | Day 7 | "8" |

 = "holy convocation"

There is a clear parallel between these two Feasts. Both are intended to celebrate the annual harvests. The first marks the springtime barley harvest, while the second marks the harvest of the principal summer fruits, namely grapes and olives. (The other major harvest feast, to mark the corn harvest, fell on Pentecost).

Strictly speaking, Passover is a feast unto itself. Equally, the eighth day of the Feast of Tabernacles is clearly distinguished from the seven days that went before it: **"The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the feast of tabernacles for seven days unto the LORD."** (Leviticus 23:34)

These 'added' days, if we may use that term, are related. The first, Passover, is the day that the Lord went to Calvary, while the last refers to the day that the Lord will return to earth and tabernacle among us. This will fulfill the prophecy in Isaiah where Jesus is called Emmanuel, 'God among us' or 'God dwelling in person among us.'



The eighth day is therefore a reference to the Resurrection, when Christ obtained an immortalized human body and with it the right to come to earth and live among us – forever. It stands for 'Sunday', the first day of the week, when Jesus rose from the grave. As such it both represents and commemorates **"the day which the LORD hath made."**

This tells us a great deal about Sunday in the life of every born-again Christian. As believers, Christ already dwells in us through the Holy Spirit. By observing Sunday as a special day in God's wonderful work of redemption – the day the LORD has made – we celebrate the resurrection, our justification through Christ, and the ongoing work of sanctification that the Holy Spirit is performing in our lives.

The eighth day of Tabernacles was also a holy convocation. This would indicate that born-again Christians are invited to come together on the '8th' day and, with one voice, celebrate its special significance in praise and thanksgiving. Indeed, when it speaks of **"the day which the LORD hath made"**, Psalm 118 immediately adds **"we will rejoice and be glad in it."**

The Word of God also highlights the importance of the eighth day in the Millennium, when sacrifices will be offered in the Temple in commemoration of the great sacrifice on Calvary. This may surprise many readers, but it shouldn't. The sacrifices of the Old Testament and those of the Millennium are identical. Both point in faith to the only sacrifice that could atone for sin.

The book of Ezekiel tells us that the new altar – the great Millennium altar – will have to be purged before it may be used. Prescribed sacrifices will be made on it every day for seven days for that purpose:

"Seven days shalt thou prepare every day a goat for a sin offering: they [the Aaronic priests] shall also prepare a young bullock, and a ram out of the flock, without blemish. Seven days shall they purge the altar and purify it; and they shall consecrate themselves. And when these days are expired, it shall be, that upon the eighth day, and so forward, the priests shall make your burnt offerings upon the altar, and your peace offerings; and I will accept you, saith the Lord GOD." (Ezekiel 43:25-27)

Thus the eighth day is that very special day when the Lord God of Israel **"will accept"** the offerings made by His people. This will be the day when all things are restored to their rightful place. From that day forward, in perpetuity and without interruption, the LORD will receive honor and praise from the children of Israel.

How does the Lord's Day differ from the Sabbath?

In light of what we have learned so far, we can now contrast the Sabbath and the Lord's Day in tabular form:

| | The Sabbath | The Lord's Day |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | The Sabbath was for Israel only. | The Lord's Day is for the church. |
| 2 | The Sabbath began on Friday evening at 18.00 | The Lord's Day begins on Sunday morning. |
| 3 | The Sabbath was a covenant sign between God and the children of Israel. | Christians are to "rejoice and be glad" on the Lord's Day. |
| 4 | The Sabbath was a mandatory observance. | A believer may celebrate the Lord's Day in whatever way he chooses. |
| 5 | Breach of the Sabbath was punishable by death. | Since believer is already indwelt by the Holy Spirit, it is impossible for him to be 'in breach' of the Lord's Day. |
| 6 | The Sabbath is unlike any other day of the week. | A believer may strive to live every day of the week to the same high standard as the Lord's Day. |
| 7 | The Sabbath will be observed by Israel and all Gentile nations in the Millennium. | The Lord's Day will cease at the Rapture. |

The Sabbath and the Lord's Day, respectively, are for two different dispensations and two different sheepfolds. The Jews have not been able to observe the Sabbath correctly since the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D. To do so they must have a consecrated altar in Jerusalem and a consecrated Aaronic priesthood performing the sacrifices and making the offerings mandated by God. It is impossible to fulfil some of the Sabbath requirements and to omit others. The Word of God requires, for example, that *two* lambs be sacrificed, morning and evening, on the Sabbath, instead of one.

Even the most orthodox Jews today are unable to keep the Sabbath. The Word of God foretold this seemingly impossible state of affairs:

"I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her new moons, and her sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts." (Hosea 2:11)

Hosea also foretold the long period of time – "many days" – during which Israel would not have a High Priest (the one who wears the ephod or priestly garment):

"For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim:" (Hosea 3:4)

Since the Aaronic priesthood continued intact during the Babylonian captivity, this prophecy must refer directly to the period after the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD, right up to the present day.

When Christ returns, however, the Sabbath will be reinstated and "all flesh" (Jew and Gentile) will observe it:

"And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD." (Isaiah 66:23)

The Lord's Day in Scripture

Three of the most wonderful events in history took place on the Lord's Day: The Father made the heavens and the earth; Christ rose from the tomb; and the Holy Spirit came to dwell among men.

The Persons of the Holy Trinity were immeasurably attentive on each of these occasions to the needs of fallen man. It is significant that each bestowed His wonderful gift on the same day. In light of this it should be natural for every believer to have an affinity with this special day.

The LORD also shared with mankind on the Lord's Day the remarkable revelation that He gave to His Son. Without the Book of Revelation we would have only a partial understanding of Scripture and the great Plan of Redemption.

By virtue of the Lord's Day, we begin each week in blessing and live the next six days in the power of that blessing.

Seventh Day Adventism

The Enemy hates the Lord's Day and the spiritual strength that it gives to every believer. The writings of Ellen G White, the founder of Seventh Day Adventism, are a dark Satanic deception and no believer should have anything to do with them. The Seventh Day Adventist church is one of several Masonic counterfeit churches designed by the Enemy to undermine and destroy Christianity. Others include the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Mormons or Latter Day Saints, Christian Science, and the Worldwide Church of God (with its many off-shoots), founded by Herbert Armstrong.



Masonic obelisk on the grave of Ellen G White.

White tried to convince her people that Christians should observe the Sabbath and forget the Lord's Day. She went so far as to claim that by observing the Lord's Day, a Christian was falling into Satan's trap. She reasoned that the Roman Catholic Church was "the beast" and that Sunday observance would become the principal sign or "mark" of loyal participation in the "beast" system.

Others try to denigrate the Lord's Day by claiming that, by substituting the Lord's Day for the Sabbath, the Roman Catholic church was secretly giving honor to the so-called sun god, Apollo or Lucifer. But this cannot be true because the Romans did not call Sunday by that name (*Dies Solis*) until after the first century A.D. The 8-day cycle was used up to that time and was only officially superseded by the 7-day system in the fourth century A.D. So, when Christians in the first century A.D. gave special recognition to the first day of the week, they were not competing with a pagan deity. Rather it is more likely that the first day of the week was named after the sun god in order to challenge the special standing that it had in the Christian calendar.

CONCLUSION

If we don't draw closer to God on Sunday, when will we do so?

When they were in the wilderness, the Israelites gathered enough manna on the sixth day to meet their needs on the Sabbath. Every Christian is invited on the Lord's Day to gather the spiritual nourishment that will carry him through the rest of the week. In a real sense – if he can see it that way – every week starts on the best possible day in the best possible way.

Remember Elijah, whom the angel of the LORD – the pre-incarnate Christ – graciously fed in his hour of need:

**"And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat
[i.e. food] forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God."
(1 Kings 19:8)**

Today many Christians have abandoned regular church attendance on Sunday, often because so few churches still worship in accordance with God's Word. But they lose a great deal by neglecting the Lord's Day in this way. If a God-fearing church – with a God-fearing pastor – is not available in our locality, then we need to come together in some other way and worship the LORD. Even if only a handful are meeting on Sunday for Scripture reading, prayer and hymn-singing, true spiritual blessings will accrue.

As the Word of God says:

**"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."
(Hebrews 10:25)**

The approaching day, of course, is the wonderful day of the Rapture.

In this age of rank apostasy and great spiritual darkness, every believer needs to do all that he can to strengthen himself and maintain a firm spiritual foundation. The Lord's Day is the cornerstone of the week, a time to renew our strength and draw closer to God:

**"Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you."
- James 4:8**

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January 02, 2017**

For further information visit www.zephaniah.eu

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